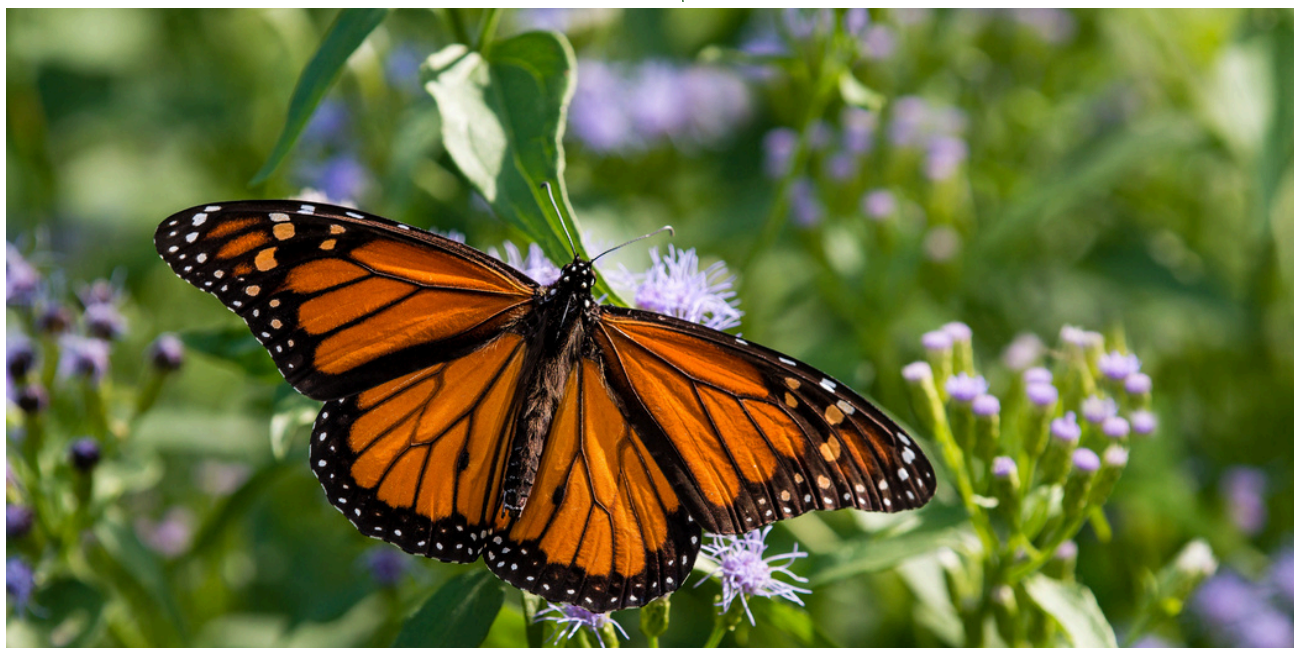


Denton County Master Gardener Association

# THE ROOT

Grow With Us 



Monarch Butterfly on Gregg's Mistflower, Courtesy of Canva

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# Buds from the Board

BY RAELINE NOBLES, PRESIDENT

Ahhh October! Fall is here. We at the Denton County Master Gardener Association hope you all are out there in your gardens enjoying this wonderful time of year and that you find this month's issue of *The Root* filled with science-based fall gardening tips to help make the most of your autumn growing efforts!



Gaura 'Pink Cloud', Flickr, CC by 2.0

"You are only confined by the walls you build yourself." It's taken me many years to fully absorb these words spoken by Andrew Murphy. Since I started working my hands in soil, I have been very careful in how I put things together in a garden. My mind told me to follow order, structure, and the norms of landscaping in whatever beige suburbia I was living in at the time. Always had a plan, always checked and double-checked to see the neighbors were happy with it before embarking, always read and re-read science based horticulture to ensure I was doing it "right." "Right" was important.

I did okay with all of that "rightness." Things looked nice, plants grew well, and I received the social approval from neighbors and friends I craved. All was well. But was it? Over time I could not deny something seemed missing. My passion for gardening remained but it was weakened, and looking over the structured symmetry I had created left a growing empty spot in my heart, my soul. Each time I walked into one of my gardens, my hands itched to dig – and not in the "right" way, but in an unbridled way outside of logic or too much thought. As much as I tried to clamp down the urgency to dig without restraint, it would not go away. In fact, it was stubbornly growing stronger. Oh, the risk to the approval I so yearned for was a hurdle I wasn't sure I was prepared for. Yet there was an emptiness I could not deny. I think even my gardens felt it, falling into a kind of malaise I could not overcome no matter how much science I threw at them. Something had to change. That something, I knew, was me.

And so I did. This past February, when I brought out my plans for the front garden, I felt dismayed. Another year of moving this yard towards completion of the balanced beige my neighbors love. I sat on my neighbor's curb across the street and looked over at my garden. I felt sadness for the task in front of me. I did my walkabout making careful notes but with no intrinsic energy. No buzz, no rapid heart rate of excitement, it had become just another job.

## Buds from the Board (Cont.)

BY RAELINE NOBLES, PRESIDENT

I remembered someone telling me one day, “You may not be able to see the truth just yet, but your heart can still listen, can’t it?” Could it? Is that what was happening? Was my heart trying to speak above the roar of needing acceptance? Before I could think about it, I tore up my master plan – something I’ve never done in my life of gardening! Never. I can’t describe the feeling that came with each tear of paper except to say it was exhilarating and terrifying all at once.

I still feel those two opposite feelings each time I take a trowel or shovel outside – because who knows what will come of my wild abandon? There is no formal plan. There is no structured symmetry. There is no asking permission from neighbors to take out more grass than they’re comfortable with. And there is no longer malaise either with me or my plants. There is still hesitancy in claiming my new-found soul. A dear friend recently asked about my front yard plans. I could only say, “I don’t have one.” She was confused. “I thought you had one. You said you had one.” All I could say was “Yes, I did.” I could not put in words just yet about my experience but the brief conversation stayed with me – more work to do apparently on me (I’m almost 70 – does this education ever end? Uhh, no!).

Today, I have a huge *Gaura* front and center on one side of the garden that instead should be a large *lantana* to match the other side. It does not match – at all. My mind says pull it up. My soul sings to see it act as a calling card to my sanctuary for butterflies, bees and hummingbirds. So the *Guara* stays and flourishes so wildlife can benefit from its beauty and nectar. My blue mist and canyon daisies are out of control. While I might tame them a bit, who am I to fully enslave them to a picture perfect yard? I make a bit more room for them and again the wildlife grows in diversity and population. I leave the native plants and their seeds to drop where they may – not necessarily attractive unless you’re a bird or small animal looking for snacks or a place to hunker down for warmth or shade. I have a large shrub that’s unruly but I leave it. The baby foxes and opossums love to play and hide from rain underneath it while my husband and I watch them frolic on the critter cam.

Life is hard for everything these days. But bliss happens when I step out front, especially now when birds and butterflies and oh so many other things are migrating or beginning to prepare for winter. Now when I sit on my neighbor’s curb to get a wider view of my garden, my previous sadness has been replaced with nervous excitement for what new colors, textures, and resources for wildlife I can try, untethered from structure, landscape logic or social norms. I still follow the science of horticulture, for sure. But now I use it as a critical tandem to my imagination; what my heart whispers to try next.

## Buds from the Board (Cont.)

BY RAE LINE NOBLES, PRESIDENT

Now when I am out front freely digging to my heart's content, a neighbor stops by to say what happiness my garden gives her when she walks by each day. A stranger in a car will pull over and say she loves what my garden is turning into. And the last time I sat on my neighbor's curb, she came out, sat next to me and leaned onto my shoulder. "You've done good, Raeline. Me and the girls just love it." Then she handed me yet another painted rock her little one painted for me. A tear or two fell as I thanked her and grabbed her hand. "Come on, let's find the perfect spot for this beautiful rock." Yes, magic, free and clear. This is magic.

Sometimes our hearts sing louder than our minds. Sometimes not. But no matter how the heart may sing, you can still listen for it. Can't you? Why yes, you can. My wildscaping is fodder for my soul, but not for everyone. However, even in a restrained structure, there can be small pockets of revolution that sing to nature and you! Remember, "You are only confined by the walls you build yourself."

The Native Plant Society of Texas recommends, [Texas Wildscapes: Gardening for Wildlife \(Noreen Damude and Kelly Conrad Bender, Texas Parks and Wildlife Press, 1999\)](#). There are many others and Texas AgriLife Extension Service serves as a constant science based resource for you and your gardening!

Best wishes for a bountiful harvest of autumn!



~ Raeline

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# Creature Corner: Spiders

BY JANICE YODER-SMITH

We are seldom more than two to five feet from a spider. Considering the thousands of spider species and the millions of spiders in the world, why do we often see so few of them? Most spiders are well-camouflaged, move quickly, and can easily hide from both their prey and predators. Many are active while we sleep.

How important are spiders? They help control insect populations, limiting plant damage. Some trap flying insects in their webs. Others actively hunt their prey, including insects, other crawling arthropods, and small mice. Spiders are food for some reptiles, birds, amphibians, and praying mantises.

Spiders are arachnids, not insects. They have no wings or antennae. They have eight legs. Many have eight eyes. Their mouthparts include chelicerae (fangs) that help them hold prey and inject it with venom or enzymes. They have two body sections, the cephalothorax and abdomen. Body markings and shapes help us identify them. Spiders in Texas range from about 0.25 – 4 in. (6 – 100 mm) in total diameter (body plus legs). Dimorphic spider species females are much larger than males. All spiders are predators, and some are cannibals.

Commonly observed nonpoisonous spiders in our area include the yellow garden spider, the wolf spider, and the jumping spider. Each primarily eats insects. They may bite if threatened, but do not inject venom that harms humans. There are only two native poisonous spiders in Texas: the black widow and the brown recluse.

Yellow garden spiders (*Argiope aurantia*) may grow to a 3 in. (76mm) total diameter. They have bright yellow and black-striped abdomens and build large, circular webs featuring a zigzag structure called a stabilimentum that may deter birds from entering the web. They feed at night.

Texas wolf spider species belong to the Family Lycosidae. They may grow to about 2 in. (50mm). They have dark stripes on their gray or brown cephalothorax. They don't build webs, but hunt and pounce on prey. Wolf spiders eat insects and other arthropods. Some species attack prey larger than themselves.



Yellow Garden Spider

Photo 559547272. (c) Christopher Zacharias. some rights reserved (CC BY)



Wolf Spider

Photo 560867876. (c) Whitney Kemp. some rights reserved (CC BY)

## Creature Corner: Spiders (Cont.)



Photo 562337253. (c) Mike Cianciosi. some rights reserved (CC BY-NC)

**Jumping Spider**

Jumping spiders belong to the Family Salticidae. Many of them are less than half an inch (12.7 mm) in body diameter. Two of their eight eyes are significantly larger than the other six. Those in our area tend to be hairy and black, brown, or gray in color. They are day hunters that creep up on their prey slowly before jumping the final distance to their target. They are typically found in corners or around windows.



Photo 356363320. Nate Sabo. some rights reserved (CC BY)

**Black Widow Spider**

Adult southern black widow spiders (*Latrodectus mactans*) are about 1.5 in. (30mm) in diameter. They are shiny black with nearly spherical abdomens. Females bear a red hourglass shape on the undersides of their abdomens. They live in dark, secluded places. Insects, small mice, and male black widow spiders may be prey. Their toxin attacks the nervous system, resulting in symptoms that typically develop within 8 hours of the bite.



Photo 542511997. (c) Zachary Long. some rights reserved (CC BY)

**Brown Recluse**

Texas brown recluse spiders (*Loxosceles devia*) are found in the DFW area. Different species may prevail elsewhere. Recluse spiders are 1 in. (25mm) or less in total diameter. Their brown color helps them hide. Some call them violin (fiddle) spiders due to the dark markings on the back of their cephalothorax. They have six eyes arranged in pairs. Recluse spiders rest and lay egg cases in cobwebs in warm, narrow, dry spaces. They are hunters, not trappers. They only bite larger animals when they feel threatened. Their venom may cause tissue death (necrosis) several days after the bite.

## Creature Corner: Spiders (Cont.)

The resource section of this article provides links that may inform a decision about seeking treatment in the event of a spider bite. If possible, bringing the dead spider or a photograph of it may help the healthcare team to decide on treatment quickly. Learning that venomous spider bites seldom cause death may help alleviate some of the anxiety about the wound.

Spiders may scare us off our tuffets, or they may amaze us with their webs and hunting skills. They feature prominently in popular culture, as web-slinging superheroes and in spooky Halloween displays (please consider that those artificial webs entrap and kill spiders and other beneficial creatures). No matter where we fall on the arachnophobe to arachnophile scale, let's remember a spider's essential roles and support them with diverse habitats in our gardens.

### Sources and Resources:

*Recluse Spider – Field Guide To Common Texas Insects.* (2018, October 8). Field Guide to Common Texas Insects. <https://texasinsects.tamu.edu/recluse-spider/>

*Southern Black Widow Spider – Field Guide To Common Texas Insects.* (2018, October 8). Field Guide to Common Texas Insects. <https://texasinsects.tamu.edu/southern-black-widow-spider/>

*Spider Bites – Diagnosis & Treatment – Mayo Clinic.* (2021, July 30). Mayo Clinic. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/spider-bites/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20352377>

*Spiders – Oklahoma State University.* (2021, November 2). <https://extension.okstate.edu/programs/pest-and-hazard-management/spiders/>

*Spiders – Urban and Structural Entomology Program at Texas A&M University.* (2018, July 20). Urban and Structural Entomology Program at Texas A&M University. <https://urbanentomology.tamu.edu/spiders/>

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.* (2025, July 17). Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Texas a&M AgriLife Extension Service. <https://agrilife.org/extension/departments/ento/ento-pu-041/publications/files/spiders-1.pdf>

*The Truth About Snake And Spider Bites in Texas.* (n.d.). <https://utswmed.org/medblog/snake-spider-bites-what-to-do/>



# In The Veggie Patch: Garlic

BY TRACY SOUTHERS-PARKER AND KARI MILEY

## Garlic: Plant Now for Summer Harvest

### Origins and Benefits

Garlic has been cultivated for thousands of years, originating in Central Asia and spreading throughout the world as a culinary and medicinal staple. This versatile allium is prized not only for its pungent flavor that enhances countless dishes, but also for its impressive health benefits, including antimicrobial properties and cardiovascular support. In North Texas, garlic serves as an excellent cool season crop that requires minimal space and provides homegrown flavor for 8-12 months when properly stored.

### Plant Requirements:

- **Soil:** Well-drained soil with pH 6.0-7.0. Amend heavy clay soils with compost to improve drainage. Raised beds work exceptionally well for garlic cultivation.
- **Light:** Full sun exposure (6-8 hours daily) is essential for proper bulb development.
- **Temperature:** Cool-season vegetable requiring 10-16 weeks of temperatures below 45°F for proper bulbing. Plant in fall when soil temperatures are consistently below 70°.

### Planting:

- For Denton County's zone 8a climate, softneck varieties perform best, including 'California Early', 'California Late', 'Inchelium Red', and 'Texas Rose'. Plant individual cloves (separated from bulbs just before planting) pointed end up, 1-2 inches deep and 4-6 inches apart in rows 12-18 inches apart. Plant in October through November when soil temperatures drop below 70°F.

### Maintenance and Care:

Water consistently, providing about 1 inch per week. Apply balanced fertilizer monthly through March. Remove flower stalks (scapes) from hardneck garlic in late April or May to encourage bulb development - these scapes are edible and flavorful in cooking. Rotate garlic plantings annually to prevent disease buildup. Weed regularly as garlic doesn't compete well with weeds.



Growing Garlic

Photo courtesy of DCMGA member Kari Miley.



Harvested Garlic

Photo Courtesy of Canva.com

## In The Veggie Patch: Garlic (Cont.)

### Harvesting and Storage:

Harvest occurs approximately 240 days (8 months) after planting, typically in June. Stop watering 2-3 weeks before harvest. Harvest when lower leaves turn brown but 5-6 green leaves remain. Cure by tying in bunches of 5 and hanging in a dark, well-ventilated area for 4-6 weeks. For best curing, place on wire racks with good air circulation above and below for 2-3 weeks. Properly cured garlic stores 6-10 months in cool, dry conditions.

### Resources:

- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. (2024). *Growing Garlic in Texas Varieties and Cultivation*. Retrieved from <https://howtogroweverything.com/growing-garlic-in-texas/>
- The Dallas Garden School. (2022). *When and How to Plant Garlic in North Texas*. <https://thedallasgarden.com/when-and-how-to-plant-garlic-in-north-texas/>
- Central Texas Gardener. *Growing Garlic*. <https://www.centraltexasgardener.org/resource/growing-garlic/>
- Travis County AgriLife Extension. (2024). *In Austin's October Vegetable Garden*. <https://travis-tx.tamu.edu/2023/10/03/in-the-october-vegetable-garden/>

# Plant of the Month: Gayfeather

IVY SUMMERFIELD



Photos courtesy of DCMGA member Ivy Summerfield

## A Field Of Purple Gayfeather

Three years ago, a fellow master gardener invited me on a field trip to view gayfeather plants and other native plants on property near Decatur, Texas. I jumped at the opportunity. I packed up my walking shoes, and the following Sunday, we went off. We met the landowner, who was passionate about preserving the land and native plants. He gave us an excellent tour that introduced me to native plants that might someday adorn my own landscape. At the beginning of the tour, I was a novice. When we left, I realized that I had learned a great deal and found a new love: the prairie gayfeather plant.

The gayfeather's colors, texture, and variable height contribute to its beauty. Butterflies are attracted to the vibrant, delicate, and uniform purple gayfeather flowers, enhancing the plant's majesty. Some plants topped 5 feet. Its base has vivid, thin, green grass-blade leaves pointing upward. The stem, sturdy and erect, showcases the delicate, purple flowers at its top. What I saw surprised and excited me, especially when I discovered a variety of gayfeathers would work in my much smaller landscape. I learned that I could start gayfeathers from seed and grow them in a container or in one of my rock gardens.

After we returned from our trip, I began researching the prairie gayfeather on the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) website (1). That site documented that the prairie gayfeather is drought-tolerant once it has been established. My research then led me to the Texas Smart Scape website to learn about efficient and effective water use for my native plant garden (2).

### Origin

According to the NPSOT website, a large concentration of prairie gayfeather was found in the East Central Texas Plains, Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes, with the Western Gulf Coastal Plain exhibiting the heaviest concentration (3). To learn more about other kinds of gayfeather plants, I turned to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center website. Their information helped me find varieties to use in my flowerbeds, rock garden, and decorative planters. I also learned that the plants are sometimes called Blazing Stars (4).

## Gayfeather (Cont.)

### Common Varieties

Size and other attributes vary between varieties of the gayfeather plant, also known as Blazing Star or *Liatris*. Key points to consider when selecting a plant variety include bloom time, light and water requirements, and mature size (height and width). Three varieties of gayfeather that perform well in north central Texas are:

- ‘Texas Blazing Star’ (*Liatris mucronata*) – Grows to 2-2.5' tall and 1-2" wide. Recommended by the Henderson County Master Gardener Association for use in perennial borders, native plant gardens, cottage gardens, and prairie areas. Flowers may be cut and/or dried for display (5).
- ‘Thickspike Gayfeather’ (*Liatris pycnostachya*) – Grows to 2-5' tall and 1-2' wide. It is used in pastures for cattle grazing. Flowers may be cut and/or dried for display. Drying flowers rapidly in the dark improves color retention (6).
- ‘Blazing Star’ (*Liatris spicata*) grows to 2-4' tall and 0.75-1.5' wide. It is well-suited for xeriscape gardens. It can be grown from seed, but it takes time to establish. It can be described as a very compact tuberous-rooted perennial (7).



Photos courtesy of DCMGA member Ivy Summerfield

### Other Consideration

A key to successful gardening is the right plant in the right place at the right time. I surveyed my property and selected the ideal spot for each variety of gayfeather, with its beautiful purple blooms. This plant is labeled drought-tolerant, but it may require additional hydration to support it in its first year in the ground.

#### Plant Benefits

As a group of plants, gayfeathers provide gardeners with opportunities to have blooming plants in various microclimates in their gardens. Their conspicuous flowers make them ornamental, while their drought and heat tolerance make them Texas survivors. Gayfeathers produce nectar for pollinators, including butterflies, wasps, and bees, but they have minimal deer-resistance.

- |                                                                          |                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Ornamental Use: perennial garden, Rocky hillside, Rock gardens.        | • Interesting Foliage: yes |
| • Wildlife Use: <i>Liatris</i> spp. support butterflies, birds, and bees | • Attracts: Butterflies    |
| • Conspicuous Flowers: yes                                               | • Nectar Source: yes       |
|                                                                          | • Deer Resistant: minimal  |

## Gayfeather (Cont.)

### PROPAGATION:

- Seed: At the end of each season, collect the dried seeds from your established plant. *Liatris spicata* seeds have been proven to have a higher germination rate when they are vernalized for 8 to 10 weeks. Vernalization can be done by storing the seed in a cool damp environment, such as inside of a sealable bag with dampened peat moss in your refrigerator.” Purchase seeds from a reliable local nursery that specializes in native plant seeds or order them online from a trustworthy source. Plant in late autumn.
- Division: Dig up your plant, separate the corms, and replant in late autumn.
- Sharing is Caring: Remember to share with your friends.

### SPACING:

- Seeds: Plant 1-2 inches deep; this will promote and protect the roots
- Spacing: 12-18 inches apart

### WATER:

- Initial Planting: Water 1-2 times a week till established.
- Established plants are drought-resistant and can withstand dry spells. Native plants may require additional water in their first years as they develop strong, deep roots. Check mature plants during prolonged drought, and water as necessary.

### SOIL TYPE:

- Well-drained, sandy to sandy loam soil
- pH requirement 6.0-7.0

### LIGHT:

- Full sun

### REGULAR MAINTENANCE:

- Visual inspection can ensure a healthy plant.
- In spring, fertilize to help your plant grow strong roots and blooms.
- In summer, monitor watering and deadhead spent blooms.
- In winter, prune to the ground and cover with a light layer of mulch.

I hope our readers take opportunities to visit native gardens and other demonstration gardens in their local area. Inspiration awaits! Knowledge abounds on the Denton County Master Gardener, NPSOT, and Lady Bird Johnson Wildlife Center websites. Let's surround ourselves with color, texture, and fresh air.

### Resources

Gayfeather. (n.d.), <https://txsmartscape.com/plant-search/gayfeather>

Henderson County Master Gardener Association. (2024, February 18). *Texas Blazing Star*. HCMGA. <https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/plant-library/texas-blazing-star/>

Native Plant Society of Texas. (2025c, July 22). *Liatris punctata* – Native Plant Society of Texas. <https://www.npsot.org/posts/native-plant/liatris-punctata-var-mucronata/>

Native Plant Society of Texas. (2025a). *Liatris pycnostachya* – Native Plant Society of Texas. <https://www.npsot.org/posts/native-plant/liatris-pycnostachya/>

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center – the University of Texas at Austin. (n.d.). [https://www.wildflower.org/plants/search.php?search\\_field=Gayfeather&family=Acanthaceae&newsearch=true&demo=](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/search.php?search_field=Gayfeather&family=Acanthaceae&newsearch=true&demo=)

*Liatris spicata* “Kobold” – Plant Finder. (n.d.). <https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=d790>

*Liatris spicata* (Blazing Star, Blazing Stars, Dense Blazing Star, Dense Button Snakeroot, Gayfeather, Marsh Blazing Star, Sessile-headed Blazing Star, Snakeroot, Spike Gayfeather) North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox. (n.d.). <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/liatris-spicata/>

Wynia, R. (n.d.). *Thickspike Gayfeather*. United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/plantmaterials/kspmcpg8092.pdf>

## What to Plant in October

- This is THE time to plant bluebonnet seeds for a beautiful spring display.
- Garlic can be planted through October.
- Perennial herbs such as oregano and thyme.
- Transplant into the garden broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, lettuce, and greens.
- Most trees can be planted in October. Ornamental, shade and fruit.
- Resist pruning your deciduous trees until winter.
- Mulch all bare soil.
- Apply preemergence herbicide to lawns to avoid spring weeds.

For more monthly tips:

<https://www.dcmga.com/maintain-and-solve-problems/maintain/monthly-gardening-tips/>

## SEPTEMBER TURF TIP

# TIME TO APPLY PRE-EMERGENT TO YOUR NORTH TEXAS LAWN

## MID-SEPTEMBER THROUGH EARLY OCTOBER

THERE'S A SPECIFIC TIME-FRAME TO APPLY



Apply Fall pre-emergents when soil temperatures drop to around 70F for 4-5 consecutive nights or when nighttime lows are 60-65F. This will vary a lot from year to year and region to region. For North TX, this is typically between mid-September to early October. Your time is limited!

## STOP THE GROWTH OF COOL WEATHER WEEDS ONCE THE COLD WEATHER USHERS IN WITH RAIN AND A COLD FRONT - IT'S TOO LATE

A pre-emergent application will inhibit the seeds before they can "emerge" or germinate in the cooler weather.



## REMEMBER, NOW IS THE TIME

DON'T MISS THIS BRIEF WINDOW FOR TREATMENT



If you miss this deadline, then the cool-season annual seeds will germinate and it will be another year before you can treat them.

## WHAT TO APPLY

CORN GLUTEN MEAL, BENEFIN AND OTHER OPTIONS

Corn Gluten Meal can have a success of up to 60% if it does not receive rain for five to seven days after it is applied. Benefin will only be effective if applied in the short time frame from mid-September to October. To read more about the different herbicides and the weeds they affect, visit:

[Preemergence Herbicides for the Home Lawn](#)



## CHECK OUT MORE INFORMATION

ANOTHER RESOURCE FROM TEXAS A&M



To learn more about weed identification and treatments, be sure to see Texas A&M AgriLife's Extension's free download:

["A Homeowner's Guide to Herbicide Selection for Warm Season Turf Grasses"](#)

Denton County Master Gardener Association

Questions? Contact our Help Desk

email: [master.gardener@dentoncounty.com](mailto:master.gardener@dentoncounty.com)

PHONE: 940-349-2892



## Fall Flowering Plants for Butterflies

BY CLARE HARRIS

With the start of fall, North Texans have a crucial role to play in supporting our resident and migratory butterflies. Texas sees over 400 species of butterflies and moths, the most in any state; 154 have been verified in Denton County. Common sightings in this area include the monarch, queen, Gulf fritillary, painted lady, red admiral, common buckeye, and pipevine, giant, and black swallowtails.

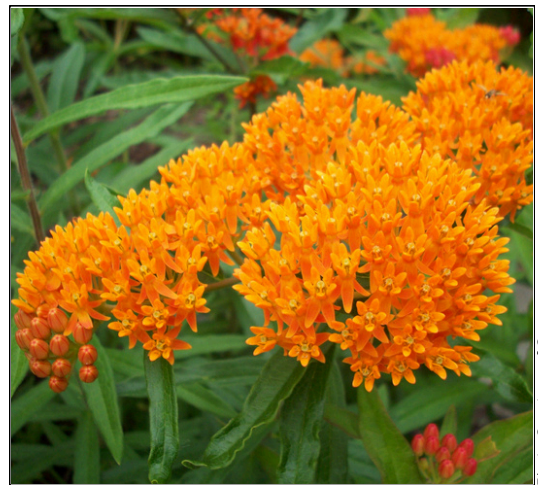
Butterflies require food from spring through fall, so it's essential to grow plants that flower throughout or have overlapping bloom seasons. Two types of plants are necessary in your garden: nectar plants, which provide the sugary fuel adult butterflies need for energy and migration, and host plants, where butterflies lay their eggs and caterpillars feed and grow. Some plants serve both purposes, making them especially valuable for butterfly gardens.

Plant nectar and host plants in sunny locations protected from strong winds and in clusters or clumps rather than rows of plants, as butterflies spot large color blocks more easily than scattered individual plants. Select varieties with different flower colors and shapes. Butterflies like bright colors—particularly pink, purple, yellow, orange and red.

Here are some plants you can add to your garden to provide fall nectar for butterflies. They will not only feed the butterflies, but also ensure your garden looks beautiful well into fall.

**Butterfly Milkweed** (*Asclepias tuberosa*): This 1-2' tall native perennial produces bright orange flower clusters from May through September and serves as an essential host plant for monarchs while also providing nectar. It requires full sun and well-draining soil and is drought-tolerant.

Other milkweed species are host and nectar sources: Antelope Horns (*Asclepias asperula*), Green Antelope Horns (*Asclepias viridis*), and Swamp or Pink (*Asclepias incarnata*). Select the best variety for your landscape conditions.



Butterfly Milkweed

Photo Courtesy of Canva

Note: Tropical Milkweed is not recommended, as it can be harmful to monarchs, reducing mating success and causing poor flight performance. If this is growing in your yard, cut it down early or remove it before migration. Cut all milkweed down in October to prevent straggling butterflies from laying eggs.

## Fall Flowering Plants for Butterflies (Cont.)



**Boneset**

Photo courtesy of DCMGA member Clare Harris

**Boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*):** This plant is a late season lifesaver, providing nectar from white flower clusters when other plants have gone to seed. A host to dozens of species, boneset is perfect for a wetter spot in your yard where rainwater pools or drains slowly. Give it plenty of space, as boneset can reach 4-6' tall and wide in full sun.

**Cowpen Daisy (*Verbesina encelioides*):** A reliable annual that enjoys sun, dry soil, and little water. At 3-4' tall with large yellow flowers, it provides nectar to late season butterflies and fall migration.

### **Gregg's Mistflower (*Conoclinium (Eupatorium) greggii*):**

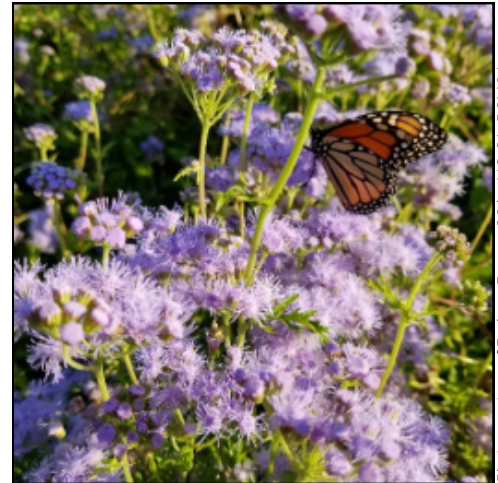
This 2-3' tall native perennial produces small clusters of fuzzy blue-purple flowers that bloom from spring through fall and is a nectar source for bees and butterflies, especially queen butterflies. It thrives in full sun to partial shade, adapts to any soil type, and is drought-tolerant. If you can only plant one plant for butterflies, this is a great option.

### **Fall or Aromatic Aster (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*):**

This 1-3' tall native perennial creates masses of small lavender daisy-like flowers from September through November and serves as both a host plant and nectar source. It prefers full sun to partial shade with well-draining soil and will tolerate drought.

### **Flame Acanthus (*Anisacanthus quadrifidus* var. *wrightii*):**

With bright orange-red flowers that feed butterflies and hummingbirds, this native, deciduous shrub is both a host plant and nectar source. It's also drought-tolerant and adapted to many different Texas soils. For maximum blooms, plant in full sun. Don't worry when this plant dies to the ground during winter; it will reemerge in spring.



**Gregg's Mistflower**

Photo courtesy of Barbara Brown. CC by NC-SA. DCMGA



**Flame Acanthus**

Photo 11547 courtesy of Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. By Joseph A. Marcus

## Fall Flowering Plants for Butterflies (Cont.)

**Passion Vine (*Passiflora incarnata*):** Serving as both a host plant and nectar source for several butterflies, this vine can climb or sprawl up to 25'. Consistently blooming with showy, purple flowers from March to November in sun or partial shade, it has low water needs and grows in most soils.



Passion Vine

Photo 12419 courtesy of Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. By Joseph A. Marcus

**Maximilian Sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*):** This native prairie perennial with large, bright yellow flowers can grow up to 10' tall in full sun and is a nectar source for fall migration. It likes clay soils but will tolerate a wide range. If you have the space, this is an excellent choice for its distinctive flowers and many wildlife benefits.



Maximilian Sunflower

Photo 38951 courtesy of Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. By Lee Page

**Texas Frog Fruit (*Phyla nodiflora*):** A groundcover that may be evergreen in warmer years or when protected from frost. Blooming with small white and purple flowers until frost, it spreads vigorously and is a good nectar source and host plant. Also, a possible native alternative to turfgrass, tolerating sun or part shade, drought, and flooding.

### Beyond Plants

Other simple ways to support butterflies in your yard:

- Provide water: Place shallow dishes with fresh water near flower clusters. Add a few flat rocks or twigs so butterflies can land safely while drinking. Change the water every 2-3 days to prevent mosquito breeding.
- Minimize pesticides: Even organic sprays can harm butterflies and caterpillars. Let nature handle pest control — birds, beneficial insects, and lizards will manage problem bugs.
- Time your garden cleanup: Wait until after the first hard freeze to cut back spent plants. Late-blooming flowers provide crucial fuel for stragglers, and seed heads feed birds through winter.

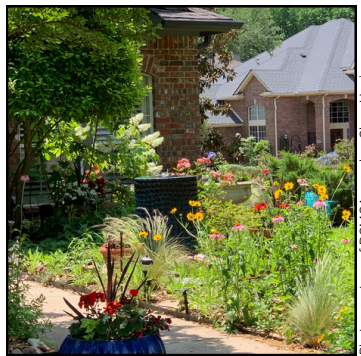
### Start Small, Think Big

To get started, pick one or two varieties of plants. Plant in clusters, grouping the same flowers together in patches of at least three plants. You'll likely see more butterflies as the plants bloom. Add more plants as you discover what grows best in your specific yard conditions. Your garden will soon become part of the migration route that millions of butterflies use each fall. It's a simple way to help wildlife while adding fall color to your landscape.

## Fall Flowering Plant for Butterflies (Cont.)

### Resources

- AgriLife Learn: <https://agrilifelearn.tamu.edu/s/product/butterfly-gardening/01t4x000004PDZAAA4>.
- Butterflies and Moths of North America. <https://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/>
- Butterflies at Home, 2025. <https://www.butterfliesathome.com/>
- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Native Plants of North America, 2025. <https://www.wildflower.org/plants-main>
- Native Plant Society of Texas. <https://www.npsot.org/>
- Native Plant Society of Texas, Native Plant List - Butterfly Garden. <https://www.dcmga.com/wp-content/uploads/docs/npsot-plants/native-plants-butterfly-gardens-denton-county-tx.pdf>
- Save Tarrant Water: Sustainability Blog. <https://savetarrantwater.com/butterflies-of-north-texas/>
- Texas Master Gardener Denton County, Plant Facts: Frostweed, 2022. <https://www.dcmga.com/wp-content/uploads/docs/plant-facts-flowering-plants/pf-frostweed.pdf>
- Texas Master Gardener Denton County, Plant Facts: Gregg's Mistflower, 2022. <https://www.dcmga.com/wp-content/uploads/docs/plant-facts-flowering-plants/pf-greggs-mistflower.pdf>
- Texas Master Gardener Denton County, Plant Facts: Fall Aster, 2022. <https://www.dcmga.com/wp-content/uploads/docs/plant-facts-flowering-plants/pf-fall-aster.pdf>



### *North Texas Gardening* *Timely Articles from [DCMGA](#) and [The Root](#)*

[Landscape Maintenance is for the Living Things  
\(Garden Basics\)](#)

[Turnip & Mustard Greens \(Path to the Plate\)](#)

[Muhly Grasses \(Plant of the Month, October 2021\)](#)

[Pecan Trees \(The Root, October 2019\)](#)

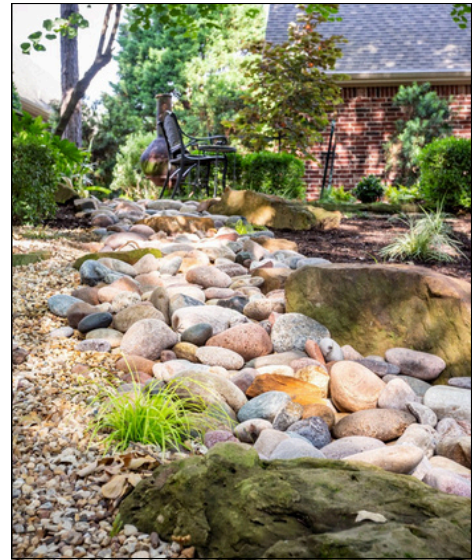
# What is Earth-Kind® Landscaping?

BY BEVERLY DUNCAN

Looking for a way to build your own landscape from the ground up, using research-based, easy-to-adapt principles? Are you eager to improve your soil, save water and plant a garden with purpose? Eager to choose plants adapted to our sometimes brutal changes in weather and soil conditions? Would your budget appreciate saving money on utilities? How about saving time and money by using minimal pesticides or fertilizers that yield negligible results?

Help is on the way!

Earth-Kind® Environmental Landscape Management System is based on 20 years of research by Texas A&M University. Earth-Kind® combines the best of traditional horticulture and organic gardening to create a low-maintenance landscape that provides maximum protection for the environment. Earth-Kind® methods and principles seek to protect and preserve today's resources for future generations. The Earth-Kind® landscape promotes a balanced ecosystem that conserves water and protects the environment through the judicious use of landscape irrigation, pesticides and fertilizers. In other words, a common sense, practical approach to landscaping.



There are three major goals and seven guiding principles to consider when practicing the Earth-Kind program. These goals and principles are as follows:

## Goals

1. Landscape water conservation
2. Dramatic reduction in the use of fertilizers and pesticides.
3. Reduction of yard waste entering landfills.



# What is Earth-Kind® Landscaping? (Cont.)

## Principles

### 1. Planning & Design

Start with a well-thought-out design for your landscape that will conserve water and energy. Implement your design over time as resources become available.

### 2. Practical-sized turf areas

Turf grass requires more irrigation and fertilizer than properly prepared planting beds and therefore will require more maintenance .

### 3. Select appropriate plant materials

Always use plants that have very strong genetics. Earth-Kind® recommended plants are attractive, highly pest resistant and are extremely well adapted to the soil and climate in our area.

### 4. Soil Improvement

Building productive soil is vital to the success of your plantings. Start by having your soil analyzed through the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Soil Testing lab in College Station. Sample bags and submittal forms can be ordered online or picked up at your local AgriLife office (more information can be found at [dcmga.com](http://dcmga.com)). If fertilizer is needed, base your fertilizer selection on the lab's recommendation. Be sure to include the plant or crops you want to grow on your soil submittal form. To improve your soil, use the following tips. For sandy soil, incorporate 4 inches of local organic plant-based compost. In heavy clay soils, thoroughly incorporate 3-4 inches of organic material and 3 inches of expanded shale, then till to open and aerate the soil.

### 5. Use efficient irrigation and rainwater catchment

Utilize drip or soaker hoses in landscape beds whenever possible. Switch from automatic to manual operation and learn to use the separate irrigation zones in various parts of your landscape.



Photo from DCMGA member Carol Arment

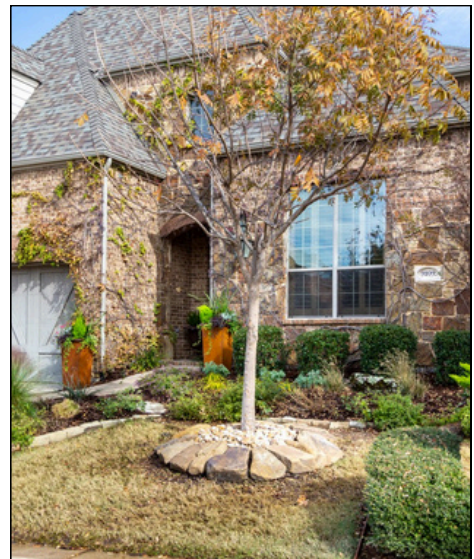


Photo from DCMGA member Carol Arment



## What is Earth-Kind® Landscaping? (Cont.)

### 6. Use mulch

Using mulch has the highest environmental impact yet is the lowest technological water conservation practice. Three inches applied will not only conserve moisture but will act as a super slow-release fertilizer as the mulch breaks down and improves the fertility of the soil.

### 7. Appropriate maintenance:

Apply mulch twice a year, usually spring and fall, maintaining 3-4 inches. Eliminate weeds, monitor and adjust irrigation systems, mow at the recommended height for your turf. Use fertilizer properly. Manage insect and disease carefully.

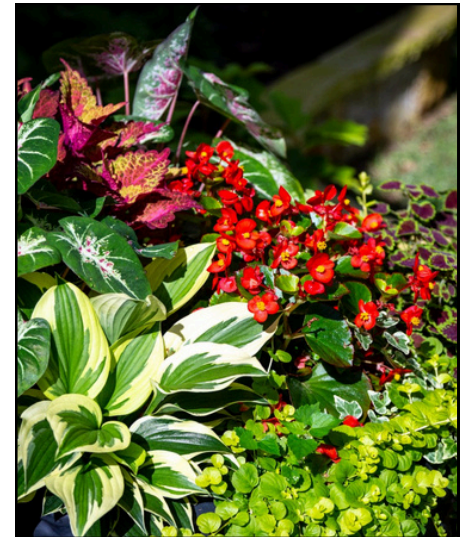


Photo from DCMGA member Carol Arment

For more information on the Earth-Kind® system visit:

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>. You can also join one of DCMGA's classes specifically on Earth-Kind® Design Landscaping. These two-day classes are offered twice a year (July and January) and are open to the public. Look for registration details on [dcmga.com](http://dcmga.com) – coming soon!! Putting Earth-Kind® techniques into everyday practice will help your family, community, and the environment.



Mark your calendar  
for a  
wine tasting and dinner.

Online reservations, event  
details, and payment  
information will be  
coming soon!



The Denton County Master Gardener Association (DCMGA) operates under the equal opportunity policy of the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service. The Agrilife Extension, which sponsors and guides the DCMGA, provides equal opportunities in all its programs and employment without regard to race, color, sex, and other characteristics.



## Denton County AgriLife Presents: 'Greener Horizons' - A Master Class Series

### Denton County Master Gardeners Present *Greener Horizons* MASTER CLASS SERIES

#### INTRODUCING DCMGA'S ADVANCED SPEAKER SERIES THIS EVENING'S PRESENTATIONS

- **Preserving Your Vegetable Harvest** with Dr. Jenna Anding from 5:00
- **Saving the Nature one Pocket Prairie at a Time**  
Award-winning horticulturist, conservationist, and author Greg Grant will talk about why nature is in trouble and how we can make a difference saving birds, bees, butterflies, and biodiversity through the creation of pocket prairies.. From 6:30

REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED  
**\$20.00 /PERSON**

ADVANCE REGISTRATION REQUIRED

[Greener Horizons Master Class Registration Form](#)



BONUS OFFER:  
BOOK SIGNING  
WITH  
DR. GRANT!

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOSEY RANCH POCKET PRAIRIE

# NOVEMBER 6, 2025

## 5:00-8:30 PM

THE GREATER DENTON ARTS COUNCIL BUILDING  
400 E. HICKORY STREET DENTON, TEXAS

Scan Here  
To Register



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is an equal opportunity  
employer and program provider.



# Discover Garden Cover Crops

BY LYNDA HARVEY

## Why Cover Crops?

Cooler temperatures and shorter daylight hours are ideal conditions to plant seeds that truly “treat” your soil. It is time to cover crop! The USDA says: “A cover crop is any crop grown to cover the soil and may be incorporated into the soil later for enrichment. Planting cover crops in your garden provides multiple benefits such as controlling erosion, suppressing weeds, reducing soil compaction, increasing moisture and nutrient content of soil, improving yield potential, attracting pollinators, and providing habitat for beneficial insects and wildlife as well as food to animals.” As a bonus, winter cover crops are aesthetically pleasing as they continue to grow regardless of freezing temperatures and snow.



Photo courtesy of DCMGA Member Lynda Harvey



Photo courtesy of DCMGA Member Lynda Harvey

Austrian peas on January 11, 2024 and thriving on February 7, 2024 (despite the dog, too!)

## Choosing Your Cover Crop

- Add nutrients naturally – Cover crops add nitrogen to soils through one of two methods: nitrogen fixing and nitrogen scavenging. Nitrogen-fixing crops for Texas include legumes such as Crimson Clover (*Trifolium incarnatum*) and Austrian Peas (*Pisum sativum*) that convert atmospheric nitrogen into a usable form in the soil for plants. Nitrogen scavenging plants capture excess nitrogen before it can run-off, and store the nitrogen in plant tissues. Excellent nitrogen scavengers for Texas are turnips (*Brassica rapa*), and cereal rye, particularly Elbon rye (*Secale cereale* L.) which was developed in Oklahoma for mid-South use. Clover, peas, and turnips also help cycle phosphorus in soils.
- Reduce erosion – Cover crops have dense root systems which help to stabilize soils and prevent erosion. They keep top soil from blowing or washing away.
- Prevent weeds – Cover crops suppress weeds by preventing seed germination or growth through competition and/or allelopathy, a chemical deterrent in the roots. The dense foliage and aggressive root systems of cover crops prevent weed seeds from germinating or maturing. Elbon rye is allelopathic, preventing pigweed, lambsquarter, purslane, and crabgrass. Turnips produce a natural herbicide called glucosinolate, which reduces weed germination.



## Discover Garden Cover Crops (Cont.)

- Manage pests – Cover crops can aid beneficial insects such as blooming crimson clover attracting pollinators. Elbon rye reduces soil-borne diseases and fights root-knot nematodes.
- Provide organic matter/biomass – Cover crop leaves and plant matter provide mulch and roots add organic matter to the biomass as all portions decompose. This humus aids fertility and increases air and moisture flow in soils. Turnips improve soil compaction while its leaves act as “green manure”.

### Planting and Care

Cover crops can be planted any time of year, but most are grown over the winter season. The ideal Texas planting time for clover, rye, turnips, and peas mentioned here is October to establish germination and timely growth for nutrients, erosion control, and weed suppression. Seed planting is generally done by broadcasting on loosened soil and incorporated at a depth depending on the seed size.

Cover crops are “terminated” instead of harvested. Termination needs to be planned to maximize benefits while avoiding reseeding, or to mitigate the allelopathy for certain subsequent vegetable growing. The plant portion may be cut more than once for mulch during the season depending on cover crop. The root portion can be turned under at season end. Or, the roots may be left in-ground with certain root crops and spring/summer vegetables can be interplanted.

Enjoy the green spaces and benefits of cover cropping this winter season.

### References

Central Texas Gardener. (n.d.). *Cover Crops for Winter Gardens*. Retrieved September 8, 2025, from <https://www.centraltexasgardener.org/resource/cover-crops-for-winter-gardens/>

*Cover crops in the garden*. (2025, August 29). Illinois Extension. <https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/garden-scoop/2025-08-29-cover-crops-garden>

*How to choose cover crops for the home garden* | American Meadows. (n.d.). American Meadows. <https://www.americanmeadows.com/content/clover-grass/how-to/choose-cover-crops>

USDA. (n.d.). *Cover Crops and Crop Rotation*. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Retrieved September 8, 2025, from <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/initiatives-and-highlighted-programs/peoples-garden/soil-health/cover-crops-and-crop-rotation>

US Department of Agriculture. (n.d.). *Cover Crop Overview: For small farms and gardens*. USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service. Retrieved September 8, 2025, from [https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2025-04/Cover\\_Crop\\_Overview-FS.pdf](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2025-04/Cover_Crop_Overview-FS.pdf)

Whitney, V. a. P. B. B. (2023, January 29). *Can cover crops control weeds and save water too?* Texas a&M AgriLife Organic. <https://agrilifeorganic.org/2023/01/04/can-cover-crops-control-weeds-and-save-water-to/>

See also: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/for-fact-sheets-by-cover-crop-species>





# DENTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER

## 2026 Intern Class Recruitment



## Join Us To Learn More!

### WHAT TO EXPECT:

- Classes will be held weekly on Tuesdays from January 27<sup>th</sup> - April 28<sup>th</sup>
- World-class education coupled with hands-on learning
- Over 30 volunteer projects in Denton County to choose from

### OCTOBER 8, 2025

General Meeting  
10:00am - 12:00pm

### OCTOBER 17, 2025

Intern Round-Up  
10:00am - 12:00pm

*Scan Here To  
Apply* →



\* Both Held at  
Global Spheres Center  
7801 S I-35, Corinth

Applications Open August 30th-October 20<sup>th</sup> at [DCMGA.com](https://dcmga.com/)

"TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER AND PROGRAM PROVIDER."

## Gardening Grandma Says...

BY BARBARA BROWN

*"Manure is a great fertilizer for plants. Save it and use it."*

### *Truth or myth? Let's find out...*

Your first thought may be, "Eww, ick, manure is messy and stinks! Who would even want to collect it to use in their garden? Just buy a sack of fertilizer at the store." For our gardening grandmas, however, purchasing synthetic fertilizer was not an option. First of all, commercially available fertilizer did not exist until the beginning of the 20th century, when scientists developed the processes necessary to manufacture ammonia and nitric acid. And, even when available, it was cost-prohibitive for most family gardeners.



So, Gardening Grandma is correct! Manure prepared and applied correctly benefits plants by providing nutrition, improving soil structure, and increasing microbial activity.

### **What is the right way to prepare manure for the garden?**

Manure must be thoroughly aged through composting before adding it to your garden or landscape. Breaking down organic materials into usable compost requires raw materials balanced between carbon and nitrogen elements, moisture, oxygen, bacteria, good microbes, and time to complete.

Although compost creation occurs naturally, it takes a long time and it may not reach a high enough temperature to kill bad bacteria and other potentially harmful organisms found in manure. The secret to producing safe composted manure is to keep a high enough temperature in the pile to kill the bacteria and pathogens. The optimum temperature range is 135°-175°F, with 150°F recommended.

You can learn how to create compost successfully in this AgriLife Earth-Kind® booklet: "Don't bag it™ - Compost it!" (see resources below). What kind of manure should you use? According to Penn State University Extension, "Cow, horse, chicken/poultry, sheep, goat, and llama manure are acceptable types of manure appropriate for use in vegetable gardens."

### **Do not put these in your compost pile!**

Texas A&M AgriLife recommends the following: "Most all organic materials will compost, but not all of them should be put in the pile. Some organic wastes will attract rodents, dogs, and cats, while weeds and pathogen-infected materials may survive the composting process. Also, fatty foods and bones should be avoided because they will attract rodents and create odor problems. Cat and dog fecal materials should not be used in the pile due to harmful pathogens."

## Gardening Grandma Says... (Cont.)

### One additional caution about using composted manure from farm animals

If you are creating your compost pile with manure from pastured animals, it is important to find out if the hay consumed by those animals has been treated with a type of herbicide known as a “persistent herbicide”. These herbicides, which include aminopyralid, clopyralid, and picloram, are not broken down by the animal's digestive system and can remain active in manure for months or even years. “This means that if you compost horse manure containing these herbicides and then use the compost in your garden, you may inadvertently damage sensitive plants.”

### How to integrate manure into your soil

“Manure should be applied to a garden no later than 90 days prior to harvest of non-ground-contact crops such as trellised tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers; and no later than 120 days prior to harvest of ground-contact crops such as lettuce, strawberries and carrots. A general rule of thumb that many organic gardens use is to apply a 2–3-inch layer of well-rotted or composted manure over the garden and then till it into the soil.”



"Steaming Compost, Trent Park, Enfield"  
© Christine Matthews Geograph CC2.0

"Steaming Compost, Trent Park, Enfield" Courtesy of Christine Matthews Geograph CC2.0

Or, make a manure sandwich with mulch. “Rake your mulch out of your chosen bed. Besides removing the mulch, this loosens the bed after spending the summer cementing together. Make sure the soil does not need gentle raking to loosen it. Then, add 2 to 3 inches of composted manure to the soil surface. Put the mulch back over the top. This is your manure sandwich. The soil on the bottom and the mulch above will keep the compost damp and excite thousands of earthworms and other soil insects. By spring, the pile will have settled as earthworms have turned it into your soil.”

### Sources and Resources

Chapter 2, *Composting Fundamentals* – Earth-Kind® Landscaping Earth-Kind® Landscaping. (n.d.). <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/landscape/dont-bag-it/chapter-2-composting-fundamentals/>

Don't bag it™ – Compost it!! – Earth-Kind® Landscaping. Earth-Kind® Landscaping, (n.d.). <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/landscape/dont-bag-it/>

*Fertilizer Moves from Bones to Chemistry: A Historical Overview of Fertilizer Use* (March 27, 2015). Cropwatch, University of Nebraska, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. <https://cropwatch.unl.edu/fertilizer-history-p2/>

*Guidelines for Using Animal Manures and Manure-Based Composts in the Garden:*

[https://extension.unh.edu/sites/default/files/migrated\\_unmanaged\\_files/Resource002114\\_Rep3119.pdf](https://extension.unh.edu/sites/default/files/migrated_unmanaged_files/Resource002114_Rep3119.pdf)

*Herbicide carryover in hay, manure, compost, and grass clippings* | NC State Extension Publications. (n.d.).

[https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/herbicide-carryover#:~:text=Picloram%2C%20clopyralid%2C%20and%20aminopyralid%20can,can%20occur%20\(Table%20](https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/herbicide-carryover#:~:text=Picloram%2C%20clopyralid%2C%20and%20aminopyralid%20can,can%20occur%20(Table%20)

## Gardening Grandma Says... (Cont.)

### Sources and Resources Cont.

Team, 2013, August 27, *Making a manure sandwich: Adding compost manure to garden beds.*

[https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/making\\_a\\_manure\\_sandwich\\_adding\\_compost\\_manure\\_to\\_garden\\_beds](https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/making_a_manure_sandwich_adding_compost_manure_to_garden_beds)

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*Use manure safely in a vegetable garden: A fruitful discussion.* (March 19, 2021) <https://site.extension.uga.edu/fannin-gilmer/2021/03/use-manure-safely-in-vegetable-garden/>

*Using manure in the home garden.* (n.d.). Wisconsin Horticulture: <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/using-manure-in-the-home-garden/>

*Wise use of manure in home vegetable gardens.* (n.d.). <https://extension.psu.edu/wise-use-of-manure-in-home-vegetable-gardens>



**IT'S TIME FOR...**

# 2025 AWARD NOMINATIONS

**FOR THE ANNUAL AWARDS & GRADUATION BANQUET  
JANUARY 14, 2026**

**How do I make my nominations????** 






**All awards are described in the linked JotForm**

**NOMINATE A DCMGA SUPERSTAR FOR AN ANNUAL AWARD!**

**Nominations will be accepted September 1 - October 15.**  
Members are encouraged to nominate more than one individual.

---

**The nomination form can be accessed using the QR code and can be used for both Certified & Intern nominees.**

*Questions? Email Raeline at [rnobles2@verizon.net](mailto:rnobles2@verizon.net)*

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is an equal opportunity employee and program provider.

**BY HELP DESK TEAM**

*Q: The bearded irises in my flowerbed look so scraggly. Should I just cut the leaves back or should I divide them?*

**A:** Irises are a beautiful choice for North Texas gardens. They're very tough, drought-tolerant, and best of all, low-maintenance plants (

**Here's a list of tips for maintaining a healthy iris:**

Bearded iris should be thinned every 3 to 4 years. The larger rhizomes will start to push above the ground, and they won't bloom as well, when they are over-crowded. Iris leaves are needed for photosynthesis so the plant can store energy for spring flowering. The best time to divide iris is 6-8 weeks after their blooms fade and 8 weeks prior to the first average freeze date (November 12 in DFW). Dividing between July and September, when irises are semi-dormant, will give your rhizomes time to establish through the fall and winter, resulting in a higher probability for blooming the following spring.

**Steps in dividing iris:**

1. Using hand pruners, cut the leaves back to a fan 6" in height. Note: You won't be able to tell different cultivars apart once you have dug up all of your iris, so label on leaf fan before or immediately after digging.
2. Dig under the clump of rhizomes with a garden/digging fork, and lift the whole clump out at once. Set aside the clump for separation.
3. Select only firm, whitish-colored rhizomes to divide. Discard any rhizomes that are dark-colored or soft. Note: Holes on the bottom of older rhizomes are where roots have fallen away.
4. Cut the healthy rhizomes into sections containing 1 to 3 buds, a fan of 3 or more leaves, and a few inches of well-developed roots. Drop the divided rhizomes into a bucket of water or weak bleach solution. Note: Clean and disinfect the blades of the pruner or knife with sanitizing wipes or the weak bleach solution before cutting more rhizomes or leaves if you cut into diseased rhizomes (dark, soft).
5. Discard any unhealthy plants or rhizomes in the trash. Do not compost them.



Photo courtesy of Canva

**Bearded Iris**

**Replanting divided iris rhizomes:**

Anatomy of an Iris: Rhizomes grow from their (rounded) “heel” end, not from their pointed “toes.” Plant “toes” inward in groups of 3-7, with group centers spaced 18-24” apart. (Irises can grow around a decorative pot or tree trunk with toes facing tree.) Irises' rhizomes are clonal so the color will not cross-mutate naturally between different cultivars.

1. Plant iris in a sunny location with well-drained soil. If poorly draining soil is a problem, plant them in a raised bed. The rhizomes need the light and heat from the sun to set blooms next spring.
2. Plant the rhizomes, leaving 1/2" of rhizome exposed above the surface of the soil. Do not cover with mulch.
3. Water thoroughly around rhizomes after planting. Usually, supplemental watering is not needed unless top 3” of soil is dry.
4. Irises will not bloom well if given too much nitrogen. Nitrogen promotes leafy growth.

A soil analysis is the best way to know if fertilizer is needed. Use this link to obtain the Urban and Homeowner soil test form, which includes instructions for collecting samples, payment, and mailing: Soil Submittal Form Urban 2025. (n.d.).

<https://soiltesting.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2023/05/urbansoil.pdf>

Friends and neighbors will enjoy iris, too, so please be sure to share any extra healthy rhizomes you have!

**More Info:**

Thinning and Dividing Irises. (n.d.). “Purple Bearded Iris”

<https://txmg.org/hendersonmg/plant-library/purple-bearded-iris/>

Growing Bearded Iris in Central Texas. (n.d.).

<https://www.kenfuchs42.net/Belton/BIS%20Growing%20Bearded%20Iris%20in%20Central%20Texas.pdf>



Photo courtesy of University of Maryland Extension

**Freshly dug up iris rhizomes**



Photo courtesy of University of Maryland Extension

**Iris divisions ready for planting**

**Page 1  
Upcoming  
Events**

# Denton County Master Gardener Association



## Community Strong Farm Work Days

**Growing Vegetables for Linda Tutt High School Student Run Grocery & First Refuge Food Bank. All tasks from soil prep to harvesting as the season dictates. We will have a short education on the tasks of the day. Meet Mondays in October 9AM-11AM**

**1350 Milam Road E., Sanger**

## LLELA Nature Preserve Workday

**Lake Lewisville Environmental Learning Area**

**201 E Jones St. Lewisville, TX 75057, Meet Wednesdays 9AM-12P**

## Flower Mound First Baptist Community Garden Work Days

**Learn and grow veggies to help the community. Wear comfortable shoes, hat, and sunscreen. Bring water. Meet Thursdays 8:30AM-10:30AM**

**1901 Timber Creek, Flower Mound**

**Oct  
8**

## Seed Starting

**Join the City of Denton Sustainability and Denton County Master Gardeners for an engaging and informative presentation on the art of seed starting. Whether you're a seasoned grower or a curious beginner, you'll learn practical tips and expert techniques to successfully start your garden from seed. Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center.**

**3310 Collins Rd. Denton 6PM-7PM**

**Oct  
8**

## Monthly Meeting and Program

**Please join our monthly meeting and hear Jeff Leindecker, the District Conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. He'll discuss the fascinating history of the Dust Bowl and the resulting creation of the Natural Resource Conservation Service. Plus, you'll learn practical steps for protecting your own soil, reducing erosion, improving water quality and increasing wildlife habitat.**

**Solomon's Porch, Global Spheres Center 7801 S. Int. 35 Corinth 10AM-12PM**

**Oct  
10**

## Roots & Blooms Garden Series

**Please join DCMGA at the Pilot Point Community Center for our presentation on planting bulbs in the fall for a beautiful spring-time display. Which ones do best and when is the best time to plant them? Come and find out!**

**Betty Foster Public Library 405 Schaffner St. Ponder, 11AM-12PM**

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Events

## Denton County Master Gardener Association



Oct  
11 & 17

### Josey Ranch Pocket Prairie Work Days Oct 11 & 17

**Volunteer at Josey Ranch Pocket Prairie and learn from Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists. Join us in our effort to preserve nature while learning about this special ecosystem and help us prepare the Pocket Prairie for the 2026 community Garden Tour. Bring water, hat, gloves, small tools, sunscreen, and insect repellent.**

**Josey Ranch Pocket Prairie 1700 Keller Springs Rd Carrollton 9AM-11AM**

Oct  
16

### Roots & Blooms Fall Gardening Series

**Create a garden that supports and attracts wildlife during the colder months. Learn about the best plants and practices that provide food, shelter, and water for birds, insects, and other creatures.**

**Little Elm Public Library 100 W Eldorado Pkwy. Little Elm 6:30PM-7:30PM**

Oct  
16

### Succulent Team White Elephant Plant Swap and Meeting

**Bring ONE prized Succulent or Cacti for a White Elephant Plant Swap  
Solomon's Porch, Global Spheres Center 7801 S. Int. 35 Corinth 10AM-12PM**

Oct  
17

### DCMGA Class of 2026 Informational Meeting/Roundup

**This meeting will inform people about the requirements to become a Class of 2026 Master Gardener intern.**

**Solomon's Porch, Global Spheres Center 7801 S. Int. 35 Corinth 10AM-12PM**

Oct  
28

### Roots & Blooms Fall Gardening Series

**Create a garden that supports and attracts wildlife during the colder months. Learn about the best plants and practices that provide food, shelter, and water for birds, insects, and other creatures.**

**Lake Dallas Public Library 302 S. Shady Shores Dr Lake Dallas 6PM-7PM**

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*You're Invited*  
**October 2025, Monthly General  
Meeting & Program**

**Jeff Leindecker,**  
*District Conservationist with USDA  
Natural Resources Conservation  
Service*

**"Natural Resources  
Conservation Service History  
and Current Programs"**



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October 8, 2025, 10 am  
Global Spheres Center, Solomon's Porch  
7801 S Interstate 35E, Corinth, TX 76210



As Master Gardeners, our mission is to educate and inspire Denton County residents through research-based horticulture, to promote eco-friendly gardens and enduring landscapes that enrich our communities.

### Extension EEO Statement

Texas A&M Agrilife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.



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### Social Media

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/DentonCountyMGA>

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/DentonCountyMGA>

X (formerly Twitter):

<https://twitter.com/DentonCountyMGA>

Pinterest:

<https://www.pinterest.com/DentonCountyMGA>

YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/c/DentonCountyMasterGardener>

### Save the Date

- Oct. 8 Monthly Meeting
- Oct. 10 Roots & Blooms Garden Series
- Oct. 11 Josey Ranch Pocket Prairie Workday
- Oct. 16 Succulent Team White Elephant Plant Swap & Meeting
- Oct. 17 DCMGA Class of 2026 Informational Meeting/Roundup

### Contact Information

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### Content

**The Submission deadline for the November edition of *The Root* is October 5.** Submissions may be revised at the discretion of the editor.

Ideas, photos, and articles are welcome and may be submitted to Communications Director Donna Hull at [doctorhulld@gmail.com](mailto:doctorhulld@gmail.com).

Unless otherwise attributed, all photos are courtesy of Denton County MGA.